

The Sixty-second Season of
THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2490th Concert

THE BARTÓK QUARTET

**PÉTER KOMLÓS, *violin* GÉZA HARGITAI, *violin*
GÉZA NÉMETH, *viola* LÁSZLÓ MEZŐ, *cello***

Sunday Evening, 21 March 2004
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Quartet in B-flat Major (“The Hunt”)
(1756–1791) K. 458 (1785)

Allegro vivace assai
Menuetto: Moderato
Adagio
Allegro assai

Antonín Dvorák Two Waltzes
(1841–1904) (1880)

Waltz in A Major, Op. 54, No. 1 (Moderato)
Waltz in D Major, Op. 54, No. 4 (Allegro vivace)

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven Quartet in C Major (“Rasumovsky”)
(1770–1827) Op. 59, No. 3 (1805–1806)

Introduzione: Andante con moto; allegro vivace
Andante con moto quasi allegretto
Menuetto: Grazioso
Allegro molto

*The use of cameras or recording equipment during
the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell
phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.*

*For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.*

The Musicians

The **Bartók Quartet's** tonal beauty, clarity, directness, and exceptional ensemble playing have inspired critics and audiences alike to acclaim it as one of the most distinguished chamber groups on the international scene. "It is clearly one of the great quartets of the world" (*The New York Times*). Formed in 1957, the Bartók Quartet rose to worldwide fame as winner of the 1959 International Haydn Competition in Budapest and the International Schumann Competition in Berlin the following year. In 1963 the ensemble captured first place at the Budapest Competition and the prestigious International String Quartet Competition in Liège, Belgium. The Kossuth Prize, Hungary's highest award, was conferred upon the quartet in 1970 and again in 1997.

The quartet members first played together at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest under the tutelage of the renowned teacher and composer Leo Weiner. Inspired and encouraged by Weiner, they formed a professional ensemble and called themselves the Komlós Quartet until 1963, when the name of Hungary's greatest twentieth-century composer was chosen. The group performs on four of the finest instruments of the eighteenth century. First violinist Péter Komlós plays the famed "Hamma" Stradivarius built in 1731.

The Bartók Quartet's frequent tours of North America have taken it to virtually every major music center, including New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, Cincinnati, Baltimore, New Orleans, Quebec, Toronto, and Montreal. Recent schedules have taken the quartet to such major festivals as Tanglewood, Spoleto, Salzburg, Edinburgh, Aix-en-Provence, and Lucerne. The quartet has presented and recorded the complete string quartets of its eponym, Béla Bartók, on many occasions, earning exceptional critical acclaim in the process. The ensemble's recording of the Beethoven quartets was cited by *High Fidelity* as one of the greatest recordings of the last quarter century. The Bartók Quartet appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Curzon & Kedersha Artists Management of New York City.

Program Notes

Mozart expressed profound respect and admiration for the inimitable string quartet writing of his “most dear friend” Joseph Haydn in the dedication of the set of six string quartets he wrote in 1785, which are known as the “Haydn” *Quartets*. Outstanding among those quartets is the fourth, the *String Quartet in B-flat Major, K. 458*, which radiates a sunny disposition. Its sobriquet, “*The Hunt*,” stems from the horn call used in the opening theme of the first movement (*Allegro vivace assai*). The recurrence of this horn figure throughout the first movement lends it a happy, bucolic atmosphere. The second movement (*Menuetto: Moderato*) has an ABA format, in which a syncopated theme that is rhythmic yet somber (A) precedes and follows a trio (B section) that is rhythmically stable, harmonically delightful, and free-spirited. The lyrical third movement (*Adagio*) has themes that are mellifluous and poignant. Its sensuous disposition presages emotional qualities associated with the romantic era. The finale (*Allegro assai*) has a spontaneous and capricious spirit noted by Walter Cobbett (1847–1937) in his book *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*: “[The movement has] a Mozartean roguishness and Haydnesque humor.”

Antonin Dvorák’s *Waltzes, Op. 54*, contained eight waltzes for solo piano when completed in 1880. Due to their rhythmic complexity, these waltzes do not lend themselves to dancing, but are suited instead to the concert stage. Dvorák, who was quite enamored with them, almost immediately arranged the first and fourth of the set for string quartet. The manuscript copies of these two compositions in a new genre were circulated widely among amateur groups while Dvo_ák was alive, but the printed scores did not become available until 1911, seven years after his death. Dvo_ák liked the waltzes so much that he arranged them for string orchestra and included them in a concert he conducted in March 1880 at the National Theater in Prague.

The Russian melodies found in Beethoven’s *String Quartet in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3*, not only recall themes used in the second quartet from the same opus, but also salute the patron to whom all three “*Rasumovsky*” *Quartets* are dedicated. Andreas Kyrillovich Rasumovsky (1752–1836) was the Russian ambassador to the Habsburg imperial court when Beethoven lived and worked in Vienna. The ambassador recognized

the uniqueness of Beethoven's music and frequently hosted musicales in which it featured prominently. The quartet has a nickname, "*Heroic*," which refers to the ceremoniously bold presentation of the opening movement's second theme. That theme is very close to Beethoven's fourth and fifth symphonies in spirit and summarizes the overall experience of the "*Rasumovsky*" *Quartets*, which in turn encapsulate the ideas and emotions of their time.

Programs notes by Elmer Booze